

Friends of the Earth Australia

MEDIA RELEASE; Monday 7 October 2002, 2pm

Peaceful protest a Success, say organisers

The three day protest against the Pine Gap joint defence facility outside of Alice Springs concluded this afternoon with a peaceful and up-beat rally in town. However, organisers have condemned the mornings action by Northern Territory police as unjustified violence against campers at the protest site.

"People were packing up in the early morning to head into town for the scheduled festival and closing rally with the local community when police moved in without warning. They arrested around eight members of the camp with excessive use of force and injured several others," said Friends of the Earth spokesperson, Bruce Thompson this morning. "The use of force against people simply packing up their camp after a peaceful weekend was unprovoked. We are shocked and disappointed by the unnecessary escalation of hostility on behalf of the police."

Despite the actions of the police this morning, campers took their peaceful protest to Alice Springs and marched from the Council Gardens, past the police lock up and the court house to celebrate the end of the weekends activities.

The protest over the weekend have seen 17 arrests, including:

- 4 on Saturday, which saw "weapons" charges being brought against two protesters for carrying paint;
- 5 on Sunday for breaching the security fences of the military facility; and
- 8 on Monday. Charges have yet to be laid against the people arrested at the camp this morning.

"The aims of this protest were simply to raise awareness of the existence and purpose of the Pine Gap facility in war fighting, and in terms of that aim we have had a very successful weekend," said Dimity Hawkins, Friends of the Earth spokesperson.

The protest attracted a diverse cross section of the Australian community of around 500 people over the weekend, including local residents, community groups, doctors, lawyers, parliamentarians and students. "The actions these people have taken have been overwhelmingly peaceful and positive." said Bruce Thompson. "The protest has been hugely successful in making the links about the base and its role in the looming war against Iraq."

OzPeace

MEDIA RELEASE: Monday 7 October 2002, 7am

Weapons of *Mess* Destruction?

Peace groups today call for equity in sentencing as two protesters face court for "weapons charges" following their arrests at the Pine Gap military facility on Saturday.

The arrests were carried out as peaceful protesters took their concerns about the growing likelihood of a war in Iraq to the desert facility.

"When they talk of protesters being in possession of paint bombs, they are talking of weapons of **mess** destruction," said Jacob Grech, spokesperson for OzPeace. "But when we talk of what Pine Gap does, we talk of weapons of **mass** destruction continuing to be made effective by the US, and there is a huge difference."

Today protesters will take Pine Gap to town to draw the links between the military base and related facilities in Alice Springs.

"Many of the residents of Alice Springs are unaware of the military links and associated dangers just down the road from their homes," said Jacob Grech.

Protesters have welcomed the generosity and support of the overwhelming majority of local residents over this weekend, marked yesterday by around 80 locals joining protesters at the Pine Gap gates to show their opposition to the presence of the military facility.

"US bases have long been the fear that dare not speak its name in towns like Alice Springs," said Jacob Grech. "But this weekend's events have peacefully and creatively exposed Pine Gap for what it is, and protesters thank the local residents and supporters all around Australia for making this possible."

Friends of the Earth Australia

MEDIA RELEASE; Sunday 6 October 2002, 3.30 pm

Desert peace protest grows

The protest at the Pine Gap joint defence facility grew today as parliamentarians and doctors joined protesters and local residents at the gates in peaceful actions.

Senator Kerry Nettle, newly elected Greens Senator, and Senator Lyn Allison, from the Australian Democrats, joined with 300 protesters at the military installation. Both the Greens and the Democrats committed to continuing calls for a parliamentary inquiry into Australian involvement in a war against Iraq, including exploring the use of the Pine Gap base.

Doctors from the Medical Association for Prevention of War provided a colourful action which culminated in the presentation of a petition, signed by several hundred medical professionals across Australia, to Base officials. The petition called for the United States government to relinquish their lease on the facility in the name of public health.

Also joining the protest was a strong and vocal contingent of over 80 local residents from the Alice Springs community who wanted to make clear their opposition to the presence of the military facility.

The morning ended with a local indigenous representative Vince Forrester who spoke strongly about the bases impact on Australian sovereignty.

Friends of the Earth spokesperson, Bruce Thompson said this afternoon, "Despite the seriousness of the global issues we face, people have managed to maintain a large protest at the gates over the past two days with humour and creativity and a strong sense of purpose. This protest and others being held around Australia and across the world are a part of a catalyst of the resurging peace movement."

The protest will conclude tomorrow with a festival parade through the streets of Alice Springs.

Medical Association for Prevention of War Australia

Sunday 6th October 2002

spokesperson: Dr Bill Williams, GP

Presentation of National Petition against Pine Gap and launch of Trilateral Initiative.

Doctors reject war

Doctors from the Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia) will this morning be taking action at the US military spy base, Pine Gap.

As part of the actions, the doctors delegation will present a petition to the base signed by over 200 medicos around Australia. The petition notes that "As Pine Gap is a prime nuclear target in Australia, we believe that the dismantling of this installation is a vital preliminary step in the health care for all Australians."

Dr Bill Williams, spokesperson for MAPW, said this morning, "The mere threat of nuclear war is a health concern for all people - the existence of war fighting systems such as the ones located at Pine Gap make the nuclear threat closer to a reality."

"Pine Gap is for fighting wars," said Dr Bill Williams "Terrorists kill, but war kills a great many more people."

The MAPW doctors will present the petitions in a colourful ceremony at Pine Gap near Alice Springs at 11.30am today, Sunday October 6th 2002.

In addition to presenting the petition, Dr Williams will be announcing the launch of a "Trilateral Initiative" between medical professionals and health workers in Australia, Denmark/Greenland and the United Kingdom. The Trilateral Initiative calls on governments in the three countries to hold parliamentary inquiries into the use of joint defence facilities hosted by each nation to explore how these facilities will be utilised in the US Missile Defence.

Media / photo opportunity at the gates of Pine Gap, 6th October 2002 at 11.30am.

Friends of the Earth Australia

MEDIA RELEASE Sunday 6 October 2002, 11.30am

Politicians and puppets join protesters

Federal and state based politicians are joining with giant puppets and protesters this morning at the Pine Gap facilities to oppose the use of the base for any war against Iraq.

Friends of the Earth spokesperson, Bruce Thompson said today that the protest has been creative and vibrant over the past day and a half, with a diverse group of protesters present at the base. He said he hoped the message for peace gets through to the Howard government.

"Our government has not been listening to the Australian people when we say that we will not go to war under another nation's leadership," said Bruce Thompson. "Therefore we have to take the message directly to them, whether it be by taking it to parliament house, our cities streets or the military facilities in our deserts."

Newly elected Greens Federal Senator, Kerry Nettle, as well as the new Deputy Leader of the Democrats, Senator Lyn Allison, joined with other politicians, as well as doctors, church leaders, puppets and protesters taking part in the mornings events at the military base.

The Greens have called for John Howard to come clean on how Pine Gap is being used in the War on Terror or any potential war against Iraq.

Friends of the Earth Australia has an on going and active interest in the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and will continue to resist any plans for a US led war against Iraq.

Mass actions are planned throughout the day today at Pine Gap.

OzPeace/Friends of the Earth ACTION ALERT

5 October 2002 – 2.30 pm Saturday

Protesters move in on the Gap

Protesters are expected to move in on the Pine Gap defence facility within the next hour to highlight their protest against a US led war on Iraq.

Spokesperson for Ozpeace, Jacob Grech, said this afternoon, "The feeling of the community against a war is high and people are taking the message directly to the base this afternoon."

The protest is anticipated to be peaceful but direct actions are expected.

"People's passion on the issues is strong as is evidenced by the fact that many people have travelled over hundreds of kilometres to protest at the site and express their outrage at Australia's compliance to the current US momentum towards war and the proliferation of weapons in space."

Mass actions have been planned throughout Sunday and this afternoons actions are a lead up to tomorrows events.

Friends of the Earth MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 4 October 2002

National group joins in protest to Expose the Gap

National environment group Friends of the Earth (FoE) will join other Australian and international groups over the next three days to protest the use of the Pine Gap facilities in US war preparation and the expansion of the War of Terror.

"We stand on the brink of a war against Iraq, and this is a great concern for all Australians," said FoE spokesperson Dimity Hawkins.

"We have seen politicians, military personnel and social commentators decry Australia's involvement in a war against Iraq. This weekend will see ordinary and extraordinary Australian's come out strongly against the war."

"The US military uses environmental satellite imagery to aid strike planning and weapons selection for both Afghanistan and Iraq. We know that military satellites can direct new high-tech weapons to hit targets on the ground. We also know that Pine Gap is integral to these US war fighting systems, and we will not accept any role in that." said Dimity Hawkins.

Despite the on going debate in the international community and while the Federal government says that a final decision has yet to be made on Australia's role in a war against Iraq, our joint defence facilities such as Pine Gap are currently in use in preparation for strikes against Iraq.

"There is very real concern among many in Australia at this Government's willingness to compromise our national sovereignty in favour of US military imperatives," said Peter Barker of Friends of the Earth, Melbourne. "This is one of the key reasons Friends of the Earth will be supporting the peaceful and creative actions planned for this weekend outside the Pine Gap facility. We want to send our government a clear message that Australians and Australian interests are not simply fodder for the US war machine."

Friends of the Earth will join with hundreds of people – politicians, doctors, artists, students, environmental and social justice activists – in peaceful actions against the Pine Gap base, from Saturday 5 October to Monday 7 October.

At the same time there will be actions held in other Australian cities and in at least a dozen other countries worldwide as part of an international week of action to protest the war and the use of space as a fourth dimension in warfare.

MAPW – MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 4 October 2002

Australian Doctors Say "No" to Pine Gap

A national delegation from the Medical Association for Prevention of War, Australia – led by Dr Bill Williams and including doctors from Victoria, South Australia and Alice Springs – will present a petition to the Commander in Chief at Pine Gap near Alice Springs as part of a national protest against the base at 11.30am on Sunday October 6th 2002.

Around 200 medicos from across Australia have put their signatures to a national petition calling for the dismantling of the Pine Gap communications base in the Northern Territory, on public health grounds.

The petition states "Pine Gap is an integral part of the United States nuclear war fighting system and therefore inevitably involves Australia in preparing for and potentially participating in nuclear strikes..."

"This petition reflects the concerns of Australian doctors and medicos about the US bases in Australia and how they will be used in any war on Iraq or any other nation," said Dr Bill Williams, spokesperson for the Medical Association for Prevention of War, Australia.

The petition calls on the US government "as a guest of the Australian people, to relinquish the lease on Pine

Gap" and "work towards the total and unequivocal elimination of nuclear weapons internationally".

In addition to presenting the petition, Dr Williams will be announcing the launch of a "Trilateral Initiative" between medical professionals and health workers in Australia, Denmark/Greenland and the United Kingdom affiliated with the International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW).

"The Trilateral Initiative aims to highlight the concerns of medical professionals in our three key nations against the Missile Defence proposal." said Dr Williams. "Each of our nations have been drawn into the US proposal for a Missile Defence system through the hosting of US satellite spying facilities at Menwith Hill, Fylingdales, Thule and Pine Gap."